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INFO RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS 8214
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DEPARTMENT FOR INR/R/MR, EUR/SE, EUR/PD, NEA/PD, DRL
JCS PASS J-5/CDR S. WRIGHT

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: OPRC KMDR TU

SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

THURSDAY, JULY 12, 2007

In Today's Papers

Party Leaders Continue Debate over Presidential Election
All papers report Prime Minister Erdogan said the CHP leader Deniz Baykal was acting "like a spoiled child" with his refusal to compromise on the presidential candidates picked by the AKP and stressed the best way to solve the issue is to "go to the people." Erdogan urged Baykal not to "shut the doors" on compromise, and called on the CHP leader to nominate someone. Baykal had said the day before that the new president should be someone free of political party links and who is not a member of the parliament.

On the other hand, Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul implied in an interview with yesterday's Milliyet that he will run for president if support for the AKP increases in the elections, drawing speculation in today's papers that the FM disagreed with Erdogan who had said the new candidate would be nominated according to the new post-election balance in parliament. Mainstream papers speculate that Defense Minister Vecdi Gonul, State Ministers Mehmet Aydin and Besir Atalay, AKP candidate for parliament Prof. Zafer Uskul, and Deputy Prime Minister Abdullatif Sener are among the candidates being considered by Erdogan.

Turkey's US Ambassador on the PKK
Hurriyet, Milliyet, Radikal, Cumhuriyet, Zaman and others report the Turkish Ambassador to US Nabi Sensoy told defense writers in Washington that Massoud Barzani's KDP and other Kurdish groups were providing the PKK shelter, arms and explosives. Sensoy also accused Iraqi Kurdish leader Barzani of supplying the PKK with US-made weapons which were used in terror attacks in Turkey. He added he did not believe the US supplied arms to the PKK. Sensoy also noted Ankara wanted the US to press the Iraqi administration to declare the PKK a terror organization.

Iraqi Delegation to Visit Turkey

Sabah, Cumhuriyet and Yeni Safak report a high-level delegation from the Iraqi Foreign Ministry is expected to visit Turkey soon to

discuss the PKK problem and Turkish military buildup along the Iraq border. Iraqi Foreign Ministry Undersecretary Dr. Muhammad Haci Hamed told PUK Media website that the Iraqi delegation would seek a peaceful solution to the PKK problem with Turkey. Hamed stressed a Turkish incursion into Iraq would cause humanitarian and economic devastation in the region. Turkish Foreign Ministry officials said that they did not have any information about an upcoming Iraqi delegation.

Editorial Commentary on Turkey's Iraq Policy
Semih Idiz observes in the mainstream Milliyet: "There are heated debates taking place in the US Senate regarding troop withdrawal from Iraq. Turkey should pay close attention to the Democrats' proposals for withdrawal. A US troop withdrawal from Iraq could be interpreted as a positive development by the Turkish public who are full of anti-US sentiments, but among the plans there are items that would not be to Turkey's benefit. For example, dividing Iraq according to its natural ethnic structure is one of the Democrats' proposals. Political observers who know Iraq well believe that there are many drawbacks to dividing Iraq into three regions based on ethnicity. One other possibility that Democrats propose is pulling the remaining US troops to the safe Kurdish region in Northern Iraq. The Turkish military has already stressed openly that this will not be a favorable solution to Turkey. So what is the best choice for Turkey? Definitely, closer coordination with the Bush Administration is the answer. Unfortunately, recently increased anti-American sentiment in Turkey doesn't allow for full coordination. Of course, the PKK issue is another obstacle to coordination. Nevertheless, the developments prove that the Iraq problem doesn't only consist of the PKK issue. Whatever the outcome of the elections, the new government should develop broader policies on Iraq."

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Polls Predict AKP Victory in July 22 Elections
Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak carries the results of two election surveys. According to a survey conducted by Kaf Agency in 17 provinces through interviews with 2635 Turks from June 28-July 2, the distribution of votes among the parties will be: AKP 43.7%, CHP 21.1%, MHP 9.4%, GP 6.1%, Independent 6.2%, and others 5.8%, meaning that only AKP and CHP will be represented in the new parliament. Another survey carried out by MIR Co. on July 1-7 in 18 provinces with 5100 people predicts the following vote distribution: AKP 40.4%, CHP 21.1%, MHP 10.1%, and others 12.1%, meaning that MHP would also cross the threshold and have representation in parliament.

Mainstream Vatan carries a public opinion survey conducted in 17 provinces in the first week of July by GENAR Co. for the Turkish investment company AkYatirim. It predicts the following distribution of votes in July 22 elections: AKP 39.4% (302 seats,) CHP 21.8% (137 seats,) and MHP 12.4% (74 seats).

TV Highlights
NTV

Domestic News

- Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul told NTV that Turkey would take the necessary measures against the PKK attacks originating from northern Iraq if the Iraqi administration declines to do so.

- One PKK terrorist has been killed in security operations in the eastern province of Tunceli on Wednesday.

- The head of the UN Development Program (UNDP) Kemal Dervis said the UN was not successful in the fight against poverty.

- Deputy Prime Minister Abdullatif Sener said he plans to teach "institutional economy" at Ankara's Hacettepe University after the July 22 elections. Sener was an associate professor of economy before he joined politics.

International News

- An estimated 30,000 people, including chief UN war crimes prosecutor Carla del Ponte, gathered in Srebrenica to commemorate the 12th anniversary of the killings of about 8,000 Muslim men and boys.
- US military spokesman Brigadier General Kevin Bergner said al-Qaeda killed or wounded more than 4000 Iraqis in suicide attacks over the past six months.
- US Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff said Tuesday the country faced a heightened chance of a terrorist attack this summer.
- OSCE and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) are to send observers to Turkey to monitor July 22 elections.

WILSON